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WAR RELIEF WORK IN EUROPE

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The time has not yet come, probably it never will come, for any attempt at a comprehensive account of the official and voluntary relief activities of the war. They have been on such a vast scale, and have been undertaken from such various motives—humanitarian, political and military—that it would be a stupendous task to assemble and analyze the financial, statistical and descriptive data which could make any general survey possible.

The war has its spiritual blessings. We must by all means make the most of them. America, especially, latest of the great nations to enter the war, had no alternative, if she were to save her soul alive; and right gloriously she has—even as I write—brought her sacrifice to the altar. Clear thinking and clear seeing as to the cost of the war in terms of human life and physical well-being, will not diminish but increase our appreciation of its regenerating influence on national character and its revolutionary effect on spiritual values.

The broad fact, is that wealth is daily destroyed—deliberately on our part—that civilization may live. The broad fact, is that daily young men and men in middle life, vigorous, normal, sound in mind and body, are crippled for life or disabled for weeks, months, or years, and so made into dependent hospital patients; and that others are killed outright. The broad fact, is that families are dependent for their daily bread on the state or on voluntary charity because their natural breadwinners are at the war, or have been killed or disabled. The broad fact, is that whole communities, populations which must be counted now by the millions, are dislocated, driven away from their homes to live—often unwelcome—among strangers: doubly dependent because their sons and fathers are fighting and their women and old men and their children are civil prisoners or refugees. The broad fact, is that the war has suddenly blocked or diverted into other channels a great volume of good will,

experience and trained service which in every country had begun to show concrete results from organized social efforts, to reduce human misery and promote social welfare. These five, broad, incontrovertible facts—(1) diminished social income, (2) disabled soldiers, (3) dependent soldiers' families, (4) dislocated populations, and (5) crippled social movements—especially those which are educational or preventive in character—indicate the general lines of appropriate, inevitable war relief activities. We may consider them in order.

DIMINISHED SOCIAL INCOME

Relief activities cannot, of course, from the social point of view affect the actual loss of wealth and of income caused by the destruction of war. Houses, farms, animals, corps, railway rolling stock, ships and cargoes destroyed by shells or submarines, and ammunition used to destroy life and property, are simply gone. The effort put into their production is lost; no humanitarian effort can change the profit and loss account. But relief measures can and do, by a sort of rough insurance indemnity, change the distribution, the incidence of the burden. Indemnity for war losses has already been the subject of extensive European legislature, and courts and commissions have already begun to adjust claims created by old or new laws on the subject. Relief funds have been raised from private sources, and public appropriations have been made for emergency relief of those who have suffered by the destruction of their houses or their means of livelihood. Such individual losses swell the claim of reparation and compensation which the victorious nations may expect to collect at the end of the war, even though they accept the principle of no punitive indemnities. The fact, however, that the war, whatever its origin, has become a world disaster, from which the whole world will suffer economically for a long time, may as well be recognized sooner as later; and this implies that its ravages wherever they are—in Russia, Armenia, Belgium, or Serbia—must be met as far as possible from the surplus wealth wherever it is—in Germany or England, in North America or South America—in victorious or conquered, belligerent or neutral nations. This will be done in part by the terms of peace; but in large part it will have to be done by relief measures voluntarily adopted: relief appropriations of governments, generous gifts of foundations, splendid

and heroic gifts of large and small contributions through the Red Cross and through all sorts of voluntary agencies.

These activities are now in progress all over the world, helping to redistribute the available resources in accordance with human needs. They are practical socialism if one likes to call them so, or applied religion, or old fashioned charity, or democratic recognition of a public obligation. It does not matter what it is called. The world is poorer than it was five years ago. There is not as much to eat, to wear, to enjoy or to waste. Official and voluntary measures of control and relief are contributing to insure the use of what there is, in such a way, as to prevent as many as possible from having too little to eat, and others from wasting, notwithstanding the shortage. That is the first and greatest, although somewhat vague, function of war relief as it is of social control in general.

DISABLED SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

In spite of official commissions, elaborate legislation, systematic educational propaganda, inter-allied conferences and brave promises, the age-old problem of dependent ex-soldiers crippled by the loss of limbs, of eyesight, of nervous stability, of the capacity of self support looms large on every national horizon. Economic independence, through vocational re-education when necessary, through help in readjustment in an old occupation when that is possible, through stimulating confidence on the part of everybody that is possible oftener than not, is to be cherished as an ideal for the individual who has lost an eye, a hand, or a lung. We are not to be sentimental over these discharged soldiers or indifferent to their lot. We are not to allow them to be exploited nor are we to allow them to depress the standards of wages for their fellow workmen. We are neither to make heroes of a day nor wrecks of a lifetime out of their deeds and their bad luck. I have seen them already in their American uniforms going cheerfully home, having done their part, unconquered in spirit and rejoicing at having had their good chance.

Schools and scholarships; special employment agencies and workshops; definite liberal pensions not so extravagant as to discourage efforts at self-support and not to be reduced because of exceptional individual success in self-supporting effort; coöperation with trade unions and with employing industries; continuing interest on the part of some carefully constituted local committee

in solving the hard cases; official protection against neglect and assurance of attention to medical and surgical needs—are the outstanding features of an adequate provision for disabled soldiers and sailors. Any national policy which is based upon the theory that insurance, re-education, orthopaedic care and employment exchange will insure the complete absorption of our war cripples into the economic life of the nation, so as to eliminate the necessity for public and voluntary supplement to their earnings, certainly awaits early disillusionment.

The lesson of European relief for war cripples, is that education and economic adjustment are the very best means for those who can take advantage of them; but that large financial resources and infinite patience and persistence are necessary to insure even a minority of the war victims getting the advantage of them; and that the state, the local municipality, the Red Cross, and all the well disposed private individuals who can be brought to take any permanent and effective interest in the individual cripples will have their hands full. Organized national provision for education—trade, technical and professional—and for placement is a sort of solid foundation on which to build; but what needs to be built on this foundation is a retail personal interest in the individual, first of all on his own part, and then on the part of his relatives, former employers, fellow craftsmen or neighbors, and a kindly, unsentimental helping hand from an understanding friend at the right moment.

THE FAMILIES OF THE KILLED AND DISABLED ACTIVE SOLDIERS

This war differs from all the wars that precede it in the vast number of producers withdrawn at one time from ordinary industrial pursuits. It differs also in the extent to which the state has assumed the financial burden of the resulting loss to the families affected. For the first time there has been all but universal recognition of this obligation. In France the soldiers' pay is only a nominal token, but his family allowance is liberal. It includes not only a daily payment sufficient for food, but the free occupancy of whatever home the soldier had at the time of his enlistment, and numerous allowances for fuel, for sickness, for large family, for invalidity, etc., some of which are merely the common provision of the community for such contingencies, but interpreted with special liberality in the case of soldiers' families.

It is hardly too much to say, that in Russia, before the revolution, the great body of the agricultural peasantry had actually an appearance of prosperity because of the official provision for the families of soldiers. War prices for food, the suppression of vodka and other influences no doubt contributed to this appearance, and the appearance was no doubt deceptive as the destruction of capital and the diminution of production were undermining the national economic life there as elsewhere. The fact remains that those village families in which perhaps the father and one or more sons were in the army, and which by the labor of women continued to raise and market the usual crops and lived meantime under a régime of enforced temperance, found the state allowance so generous that they had no cause for complaint as to their standard of living. England and the colonies have not been less vigilant than their Allies in looking after the families of soldiers and sailors, and they have made rather more use of voluntary local service in carrying out the system of national care.

THE DISLOCATED PEOPLES

The mobilized armies unfortunately do not represent the whole of the abnormal displacement of populations caused by the war. The invasion of East Prussia and Galicia by the Russians, the invasion of Russian Poland by the Germans, the overrunning of Belgium and of the Balkans by the central powers, the descent into Triuli of the Austrians, the ebb and flow of the warfare in Asiatic Turkey, and above all the occupation of the flourishing departments of northeastern France, have resulted in refugee problems, unique in history, appalling in character, overwhelming in magnitude.

In Russia and in France, a state allowance for refugees early became as clear a necessity as the allowance for soldier's families. The Russian Government established four central commissions on national lines, one for the general Slav population and one each for Poles, Jews and Lithuanians, through which state applications were distributed to refugees. France has its allowance of a franc and a half a day for adults, and a franc for children besides free rent and relief in kind, according to local resources and needs. Obviously, however, such public provisions are only the beginning of refugee relief—a necessary but wholly inadequate measure, giving a sort

of substantial material basis for voluntary and official measures of a far-reaching kind—all of which together mitigate only in the slightest degree, the immeasurable misery of the displacement of civil populations by modern invading armies. To stay behind as civil prisoners or hostages—to go instantly by military order under a forced evacuation—to wait until the last moment and then flee as voluntary refugees dependent on the hard chances of the roadway and, at the railway station, on the possibility of a canteen,—to look some days or weeks ahead and leave while trains are running or country roads are not yet crowded, with the possibility that after all the tide may turn and the refugee find himself in the uncomfortable position of one who has been too easily frightened—such are alternatives which some millions of human beings have had to face in the past four years. Some have gone because they were afraid to stay, some because their homes have been destroyed by bombs or shells, some because they were in the way of the armies, some because it was time to go and their neighbors were going. Refugees doubled the population of Moscow, they have doubled and trebled the population of towns and villages in southern France.

THE WAR AND EXISTING CHARITABLE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

It must, of course, be borne in mind, that during the war most of the ordinary relief tasks of peace times remain, some of them made enormously heavier by the war—both because there is more to be done and because financial and personal resources are to some extent diverted to war activities. Hospitals of civilians; orphanages; reformatories; asylums for the aged, insane, feeble-minded, epileptic; child caring agencies; general relief societies; the whole vast net work of organized philanthropy, whether official, semi-official or voluntary, is profoundly affected by the war, in some ways no doubt for the better but certainly on the side of income more often for the worse.

Where such established relief agencies are conducted by the state, or where, as in France, if not public, they have accumulated through bequest or otherwise substantial endowments which are carefully protected by law and by custom, the effect of the war on their means of support may not be fatal. The larger established activities may thus go on, reducing the number of their beneficiaries, transferring some responsibilities to the special war relief

agencies, accepting on their own account some war victims and making this the basis for sharing in the special "war benefit," or borrowing is necessary to tide over the emergency. They do not often close their doors solely for financial reasons, although sometimes these have a certain influence in connection with other causes for changing the character of the work or for moving from one place to another. They are often overcrowded, and very often wholly unable to receive as many as apply to them. Sheer neglect of those who actually need shelter, nourishment, a doctor's care, an asylum in old age or mental incapacity is a familiar sight in every European country affected by the war.

It is not, however, the orphanages, hospitals and general relief societies that have been most seriously affected, but rather those activities which we in America are accustomed to group together under some such phrase as preventive or constructive social measures, as for example improved housing, educational work for the control of infection and the elimination of insanitary conditions, the care and instruction of mothers in the conservation of prenatal and infant life, the development of playgrounds and athletics and of special children's courts, the probation and parole system of preventing young offenders from becoming criminals, the coördination of philanthropic and civic activities through social service exchanges.

It is in the dynamics of the social organization, rather than in its statics, that we must look for the effects of the war. We shall find those effects complex of course. There is, I believe, a current impression that they have been on the whole favorable; that because the world has had to fix its common mind on human suffering and abnormal conditions, we are getting on faster in dealing with them. There is some justification for this impression in certain limited fields, as for example in welfare work in munition factories and in the conservation of food. There has been more intense study of certain problems arising from the war, and new knowledge so gained has been applied in other fields. Heroic efforts are in progress to do something about the prevention of tuberculosis and to lessen the waste of infant life.

Generally speaking, however, the war has certainly obstructed the social movement rather than aided it. Organized and related efforts to promote the common welfare and to eliminate the recognized and preventable causes of human misery had begun in Europe,

as in America, to show concrete results in a diminished death rate, better physique, cleaner homes, better ordered communities, higher standards of living. Perhaps there are those who would deny that such social progress was taking place, who would still, if they could be taken back to the Europe of five years ago, see only increasing poverty in the midst of progress, signs of a cataclysm sure to result from the final separation of society into two opposing classes of exploiters and proletariates. The hardships of those times appear, generally speaking, in a different perspective to those who in the last four years have been the constant companions of the families that mourn, of the families who have literally lost their homes, who may be strangers in their own country or prisoners in that of the enemy, of the broken families and mutilated human beings, as the French, after all not so inappropriately, call those who even in their country's service have lost a leg or both legs, an arm or both arms or a part of the face.

The war means not only diminished wealth, lower standards of living, less food, lowered physique, poorer homes more overcrowding, neglected children, harder, more grinding and more exhausting work, less play for children, greater moral dangers: it means, unless we highly resolve to the contrary, an actual slackening of the effort to prevent these evils, even as they exist in normal times. The significance of the Departments of Civil Affairs in the American Red Cross in France—a department which has no analogy in the Red Cross of other nations—is that there is at least one very great and determined effort to prevent this culminating disaster. The Children's Bureau, the Bureau of Tuberculosis, and the Bureau of Refugees and Home Relief represent on a scale heretofore unprecedented, for which there never has been a similar need, a national participation in relief measures carried on in another country, with complete official and popular approval, as a part of the common effort to save civilization. It is a feature of the Alliance, although one which is spontaneous and unconstrained. It springs from the war, and supplements the military operations, but it began before we were actually in the trenches and it will have results far outlasting the war. It happens to be taking place in France because this is the field of the war. It is not a gift from America to France, so much as a common investment in all that makes for the security and enrichment of our common heritage.